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### **Secretary Jewell, Director Ashe Announce \$16.5 Million in Grants to Conserve Coastal Wetlands**

*Funding Comes on the Heels of New Report Showing Dramatic Annual Loss of  
Wetlands; State and Local Governments, Other Partners Contribute  
Additional \$18.2 Million to Protect, Enhance Vital Wildlife Habitat*

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) Director Dan Ashe today announced \$16.5 million in grants to support 21 critical coastal wetland projects in 12 states and Puerto Rico under the National Coastal Grants Wetlands Conservation Grants Program.

State and local governments, private landowners, conservation groups and other partners will contribute an additional \$18.2 million to these projects, which include acquiring, restoring or enhancing coastal wetlands and adjacent uplands to provide long-term conservation benefits to fish and wildlife and their habitats.

“Coastal wetlands not only provide key habitat for fish and wildlife but they also improve water quality, support local economies through jobs and provide flood protection,” Jewell said. “These grants, funded through excise taxes paid by anglers and boaters, give us the opportunity to join with states and territories and other partners to conserve and restore these areas that are so vital to our environment and our quality of life.”

Coastal wetlands comprise less than 10 percent of the nation’s land area yet support a significant number of wildlife species, including 75 percent of migratory birds, nearly 80 percent of fish and shellfish, and about half of all our threatened and endangered species. Wetlands in coastal watersheds in the U.S. are experiencing a net annual loss of about 80,160 acres according to a [new study](#) by the Service.

“With the latest data showing dramatic annual loss of coastal wetlands, these grants become even more important,” Ashe said. “These wetlands are invaluable resources we must protect, and, with these grants, states, territories and partners will be able to undertake high priority projects.”

States and territories receiving funds are Alabama, Alaska, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Washington and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The complete list of projects funded by the 2014 grant program can be found [here](#).

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered by the Service and funded under provisions of the 1990 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. Funding is provided by Sport Fish Restoration Act revenue – money generated from an excise tax on fishing equipment, motorboat and small engine fuels.

The Service awards grants of up to \$1 million to states based on a national competition, which allows states to determine and address their highest conservation priorities in coastal areas. Since 1992, the Service has awarded \$336 million in grants under the program.

Examples of projects receiving grants today are:

### **Lillian Swamp Wetlands**

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) is awarded \$464,750 to acquire the 675-acre Lillian Swamp Wetlands tract as an addition to the Lillian Swamp Wetlands Complex. The wetlands complex lies within the Perdido River Coastal Area at the mouth of the Perdido River and borders Perdido Bay. Acquisition of this tract will support the goals of multiple federal, state, and other agencies to protect sensitive species and their habitats. The ADCNR has recommended this area as a Geographical Area of Particular Concern (GAPC), which are managed according to conservation plans. The wetlands have also been designated as a Gulf Ecological Management Site (GEMS), which means that it is considered to be important to the environmental quality of the Gulf of Mexico. Perdido Bay has also been identified as a conservation priority in Alabama's Wildlife Conservation Strategy and by the Northern Gulf Coast Wetlands Planning Program.

### **Popes Creek Coastal Wetland Conservation**

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MD DNR) is awarded an \$1 million grant to permanently protect 220 acres of marsh, palustrine wetlands, and forested land in Newburg, Charles County, Maryland. The property will be acquired through fee simple purchase, with the property to be held and managed by Charles County Department of Parks and Recreation. The property contains 92 acres of upland forest and 128 acres of wetlands, as well as some open water and beach front. Popes Creek is a conservation focus area, having been identified by MD DNR as both a Targeted Ecological Area and a Natural Heritage Area. It lies within the Zekiah Swamp area, which is a priority protection for the USFWS Chesapeake Bay Program, MD DNR, and Charles County. Plans for the site also include the creation of a biking/walking trail along an abandoned railway bed.

### **South Slough Shorelands Project**

The Oregon Department of State Lands, partnering with Coos Watershed Association and the South Coast Land Conservancy, is awarded \$1 million to acquire and permanently protect 596 acres of estuarine wetland habitats in South Slough in Oregon's Coos Estuary. South Slough is the site of a longstanding effort to conserve estuarine wetland habitat. The project site is adjacent

to South Slough National Estuary Research Reserve and state protected lands. The project site contains tidally influenced coastal wetlands, adjoining coastal fresh water wetlands, and forested uplands. This project supports goals of multiple management plans and will benefit numerous wildlife and plant species, including shorebirds, harbor seals, shellfish, and federally listed coho salmon and western bog lilies. It also is identified as a priority in the Oregon Strategic Plans for the Coastal Program and the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the 1994 Pacific Coast Joint Venture 1994 Implementation Plan for the Southern Oregon Focus Area.

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